

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution, comprising:
 - a supplier database, the supplier database including product identifying information, product inventory information, and product pricing information for multiple independent participating product suppliers, wherein the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and participating product retailers, and the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product category;
 - an order database, the order database including order information pertaining to pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product retailers, and retail product purchasers, and fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers; and
 - a programmed order processor operatively linked to the supplier database and the order database, the processor being programmed for automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing information, and product inventory information from the multiple participating product suppliers and entering the information into the supplier database, automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the multiple participating product suppliers, automatically entering the received order information into the order database,

1 automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the supplier
 2 database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order and
 3 available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier,
 4 automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each product
 5 purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from the
 6 corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order,
 7 automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to each
 8 delivered product,
 9 automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each delivered
 10 product in the supplier database, and
 11 automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered product.

- 12 2. The system of Claim 1, wherein the multiple independent participating product suppliers
 13 may further include product content providers.
- 14 3. The system of Claim 1, wherein the processor is further programmed for automatically
 15 issuing instructions for shipment of a delivered product from a corresponding participating
 16 product supplier to the participating product supplier with whom the product purchaser
 17 placed the order.
- 18 4. The system of Claim 3, wherein:
 19 the corresponding participating product supplier is a participating product retailer; and
 20 the participating product supplier with whom the product purchaser placed the order is a
 21 participating product retailer.
- 22 5. The system of Claim 1, wherein the processor is further programmed for automatically
 23 issuing instructions for shipment of a delivered product from a corresponding participating
 24 product supplier to the product purchaser.
- 25 6. The system of Claim 5, wherein:
 26 the corresponding participating product supplier is a participating product retailer; and
 27 the participating product supplier with whom the product purchaser placed the order is a
 28 participating product retailer.
- 29 7. The system of Claim 1, wherein the processor is further programmed for at least one of:

1 enabling a first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of the multiple
 2 participating product suppliers from which ordered products, listed in orders placed
 3 with the first participating supplier, may be delivered to a product purchaser; and
 4 enabling the first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of products
 5 available from another of the multiple participating product supplier from which
 6 ordered products, listed in orders placed with the first participating supplier, may be
 7 delivered to a product purchaser.

- 8 8. The system of Claim 1, wherein the processor is further programmed for at least one of:
 9 enabling a first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of the multiple
 10 participating product suppliers for which ordered products, listed in orders placed with
 11 the eligible subset of the multiple participating product suppliers, are available for
 12 delivery to a product purchaser; and
 13 enabling the first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of products
 14 available from the first participating product supplier from which ordered products,
 15 listed in orders placed with another of the multiple participating product suppliers, are
 16 available for delivery to a product purchaser.
- 17 9. A multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution, comprising:
 18 a retailer database, the retailer database including product identifying information, product
 19 inventory information, and product pricing information for multiple independent
 20 participating product retailers, wherein the multiple independent product retailers offer
 21 products of a common product category;
 22 an order database, the order database including order information pertaining to
 23 pending orders placed with multiple participating product retailers by multiple
 24 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product
 25 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating
 26 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product
 27 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product
 28 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and
 29 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product retailers by multiple product
 30 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product retailers; and

- 1 a programmed order processor operatively linked to the retailer database and the order
2 database, the processor being programmed for
3 automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing information,
4 and product inventory information from the multiple participating product retailers
5 and entering the information into the retailer database,
6 automatically receiving, from multiple participating product retailers, order information
7 pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the multiple
8 participating product retailers,
9 automatically entering the received order information into the order database,
10 automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the retailer
11 database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order and
12 available for delivery from a corresponding participating product retailer,
13 automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each product
14 purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from the
15 corresponding participating product retailer, thereby fulfilling the order,
16 automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to each
17 delivered product,
18 automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each delivered
19 product in the retailer database, and
20 automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered product.
- 21 10. A multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution, comprising:
22 a supplier database, the supplier database including product identifying information, product
23 inventory information, and product pricing information for multiple independent
24 participating product suppliers, wherein
25 the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of
26 participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and
27 participating product retailers,
28 the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product
29 category, and
30 the product inventory information is stored in the supplier database in a search table
31 common to the multiple participating product suppliers;

an order database, the order database including order information pertaining to pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product retailers, and retail product purchasers, and fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers; and a programmed order processor operatively linked to the supplier database and the order database, the processor being programmed for automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing information, and product inventory information from the multiple participating product suppliers and entering the information into the supplier database, automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the multiple participating product suppliers, automatically entering the received order information into the order database, automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the supplier database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order and available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier, automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each product purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from the corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order, automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to each delivered product, automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each delivered product in the supplier database, and automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered product.

11. A multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution, comprising:

1 a supplier database, the supplier database including product identifying information, product
2 inventory information, and product pricing information for multiple independent
3 participating product suppliers, wherein
4 the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of
5 participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and
6 participating product retailers, and
7 the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product
8 category;
9 an order database, the order database including order information pertaining to
10 pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple
11 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product
12 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating
13 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product
14 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product
15 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and
16 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product
17 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers; and
18 a programmed order processor operatively linked to the supplier database and the order
19 database, the processor being programmed for
20 automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing information,
21 and product inventory information from the multiple participating product suppliers
22 and entering the information into the supplier database,
23 automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order
24 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the
25 multiple participating product suppliers,
26 automatically entering the received order information into the order database,
27 automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the supplier
28 database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order and
29 available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier,

1 automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each product
2 purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from the
3 corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order,
4 automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to each
5 delivered product,
6 automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each delivered
7 product in the supplier database, and
8 automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered product,
9 wherein the processor is further programmed for at least one of:
10 enabling a first participating product supplier to conceal its identity from a selected
11 subset of the multiple participating product suppliers for which ordered products,
12 listed in orders placed with the eligible subset of the multiple participating product
13 suppliers, are available for delivery from the first participating product supplier to a
14 product purchaser;
15 enabling the first participating product supplier to conceal its identity from a selected
16 subset of the multiple participating product suppliers from which ordered products,
17 listed in orders placed with the first participating supplier, may be delivered to a
18 product purchaser;
19 enabling the first participating product supplier to conceal from a product purchaser the
20 identity of another participating product supplier from which an ordered product,
21 listed in an order placed with the first participating provider by the product
22 purchaser, is delivered to the product purchaser; and
23 enabling the first participating product supplier to conceal the identity of a product
24 purchaser from another participating product supplier from which an ordered
25 product, listed in an order placed with the first participating provider by the product
26 purchaser, is delivered to the product purchaser.
27 12. A multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution, comprising:
28 a supplier database, the supplier database including product identifying information, product
29 inventory information, and product pricing information for multiple independent
30 participating product suppliers, wherein

1 the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of
2 participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and
3 participating product retailers, and
4 the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product
5 category;
6 an order database, the order database including order information pertaining to
7 pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple
8 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product
9 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating
10 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product
11 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product
12 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and
13 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product
14 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers; and
15 a programmed order processor operatively linked to the supplier database and the order
16 database, the processor being programmed for
17 automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing information,
18 and product inventory information from the multiple participating product suppliers
19 and entering the information into the supplier database,
20 automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order
21 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the
22 multiple participating product suppliers,
23 automatically entering the received order information into the order database,
24 automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the supplier
25 database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order and
26 available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier,
27 automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each product
28 purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from the
29 corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order,
30 automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to each
31 delivered product,

- 1 automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each delivered
2 product in the supplier database,
3 automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered product,
4 automatically aggregating order information pertaining to multiple orders placed by
5 multiple product purchasers, and
6 automatically issuing instructions for delivery of ordered products, listed in the
7 aggregated order, from a selected participating product supplier, the selected
8 participating product supplier being selected based on a supplier figure-of-merit.
- 9 13. The system of Claim 12, wherein the processor is further programmed for at least one of:
10 automatically selecting the selected participating product supplier based on information in
11 the supplier database; and
12 automatically receiving bids from at least one participating product supplier and
13 automatically selecting from among bidding participating product suppliers the selected
14 participating product supplier.
- 15 14. The system of Claim 13, wherein the processor is further programmed for automatically
16 selecting a newly-selected participating product supplier to replace the selected participating
17 product supplier based on at least one of updated information in the supplier database and
18 updated bids received from the bidding participating product suppliers.
- 19 15. The system of Claim 12, wherein the processor is further programmed for automatically
20 aggregating order information pertaining to multiple orders placed in a physical location of a
21 participating product supplier and placed remotely with the participating product supplier.
- 22 16. The system of Claim 12, wherein the processor is further programmed for automatically
23 aggregating order information pertaining to orders placed with multiple participating
24 product suppliers.
- 25 17. The system of Claim 16, wherein the processor is further programmed for automatically
26 aggregating order information pertaining to orders placed with multiple participating
27 product retailers.
- 28 18. The system of Claim 16 wherein the processor is further programmed for enabling a first
29 participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of the multiple participating
30 product suppliers for aggregating order information.
- 31 19. A multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution, comprising:

1 a supplier database, the supplier database including product identifying information, product
2 inventory information, and product pricing information for multiple independent
3 participating product suppliers, wherein
4 the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of
5 participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and
6 participating product retailers, and
7 the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product
8 category;
9 an order database, the order database including order information pertaining to
10 pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple
11 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product
12 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating
13 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product
14 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product
15 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and
16 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product
17 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers; and
18 a programmed order processor operatively linked to the supplier database and the order
19 database, the processor being programmed for
20 automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing information,
21 and product inventory information from the multiple participating product suppliers
22 and entering the information into the supplier database,
23 automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order
24 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the
25 multiple participating product suppliers,
26 automatically entering the received order information into the order database,
27 automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the supplier
28 database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order and
29 available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier,

1 automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each product
 2 purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from the
 3 corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order,
 4 automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to each
 5 delivered product,
 6 automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each delivered
 7 product in the supplier database, and
 8 automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered product,
 9 wherein the processor is further programmed for at least one of:
 10 automatically adjusting product pricing information in the supplier database in response
 11 to at least one of order information in the order database and product inventory
 12 information in the supplier database; and
 13 automatically adjusting local product inventory for the multiple participating product
 14 suppliers by
 15 automatically monitoring local product inventory information in the supplier
 16 database,
 17 in response to local product inventory information in the supplier database,
 18 automatically issuing instructions for transfer of products out of local product
 19 inventory of a first participating product supplier into local product inventory
 20 of a second participating product supplier, and
 21 in response to the transfer of local product inventory, automatically updating the
 22 local product inventory information in the supplier database.

23 20. The system of Claim 19, wherein the transferred local product inventory includes at least
 24 one of used product, rare product, collectible product, private-label product, and out-of-
 25 production product.

26 21. The system of Claim 20, wherein the processor is further programmed for consigning to the
 27 second participating product supplier at least one of transferred used product, rare product,
 28 collectible product, private-label product, and out-of-production product.

29 22. The system of Claim 19, wherein the processor is further programmed for at least one of:
 30 enabling the first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of the multiple
 31 participating product suppliers to which product inventory may be transferred; and

1 enabling the second participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of the multiple
2 participating product suppliers from which product inventory may be transferred.

3 23. A method for multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution,
4 comprising the steps of:
5 under control of a programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
6 therefor, automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing
7 information, and product inventory information from multiple participating product
8 suppliers and entering the information into a supplier database, the supplier database
9 being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including product identifying
10 information, product inventory information, and product pricing information for the
11 multiple independent participating product suppliers, wherein:
12 the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of
13 participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and
14 participating product retailers, and
15 the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product
16 category;
17 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
18 therefor, automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order
19 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the
20 multiple participating product suppliers;
21 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
22 therefor, automatically entering the received order information into an order database,
23 the order database being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including
24 order information pertaining to
25 pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple
26 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product
27 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating
28 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product
29 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product
30 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and

- fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers;
- under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed therefor, automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the supplier database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order and available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier;
- under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed therefor, automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each product purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from the corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order;
- under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed therefor, automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to each delivered product;
- under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed therefor, automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each delivered product in the supplier database; and
- under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed therefor, automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered product.
24. The method of Claim 23, wherein the multiple independent participating product suppliers may further include product content providers.
25. The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of:
- under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed therefor, automatically issuing instructions for shipment of a delivered product from a corresponding participating product supplier to the participating product supplier with whom the product purchaser placed the order.
26. The method of Claim 25, wherein:
- the corresponding participating product supplier is a participating product retailer; and
- the participating product supplier with whom the product purchaser placed the order is a participating product retailer.
27. The method of Claim 23, further comprising the step of:

under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed therefor, automatically issuing instructions for shipment of a delivered product from a corresponding participating product supplier to the product purchaser.

28. The method of Claim 27, wherein:

the corresponding participating product supplier is a participating product retailer; and the participating product supplier with whom the product purchaser placed the order is a participating product retailer.

29. The method of Claim 23, further comprising at least one of the steps of:

under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed therefor, enabling a first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of the multiple participating product suppliers from which ordered products, listed in orders placed with the first participating supplier, may be delivered to a product purchaser; and under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed therefor, enabling a first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of products available from another of the multiple participating product supplier from which ordered products, listed in orders placed with the first participating supplier, may be delivered to a product purchaser.

30. The method of Claim 23, further comprising at least one of the steps of:

under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed therefor, enabling a first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of the multiple participating product suppliers for which ordered products, listed in orders placed with the eligible subset of the multiple participating product suppliers, are available for delivery to a product purchaser; and

under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed therefor, enabling a first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of products available from the first participating product supplier from which ordered products, listed in orders placed with another of the multiple participating product suppliers, are available for delivery to a product purchaser.

31. A method for multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution, comprising the steps of:

1 under control of a programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
2 therefor, automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing
3 information, and product inventory information from multiple participating product
4 retailers and entering the information into a retailer database, the retailer database being
5 operatively linked to the programmed processor and including product identifying
6 information, product inventory information, and product pricing information for the
7 multiple independent participating product retailers, wherein the multiple independent
8 product retailers offer products of a common product category;

9 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
10 therefor, automatically receiving, from multiple participating product retailers, order
11 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the
12 multiple participating product retailers;

13 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
14 therefor, automatically entering the received order information into an order database,
15 the order database being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including
16 order information pertaining to

17 pending orders placed with multiple participating product retailers by multiple
18 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product
19 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating
20 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product
21 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product
22 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and

23 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product retailers by multiple product
24 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product retailers;

25 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
26 therefor, automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the
27 retailer database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order and
28 available for delivery from a corresponding participating product retailer;

29 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
30 therefor, automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each

1 product purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from
 2 the corresponding participating product retailer, thereby fulfilling the order;
 3 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
 4 therefor, automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to
 5 each delivered product;
 6 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
 7 therefor, automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each
 8 delivered product in the retailer database; and
 9 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
 10 therefor, automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered
 11 product.

- 12 32. A method for multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution,
 13 comprising the steps of:
 14 under control of a programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
 15 therefor, automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing
 16 information, and product inventory information from multiple participating product
 17 suppliers and entering the information into a supplier database, the supplier database
 18 being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including product identifying
 19 information, product inventory information, and product pricing information for the
 20 multiple independent participating product suppliers, wherein:
 21 the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of
 22 participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and
 23 participating product retailers,
 24 the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product
 25 category, and
 26 the product inventory information is stored in the supplier database in a search table
 27 common to the multiple participating product suppliers;
 28 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
 29 therefor, automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order
 30 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the
 31 multiple participating product suppliers;

1 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
2 therefor, automatically entering the received order information into an order database,
3 the order database being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including
4 order information pertaining to
5 pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple
6 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product
7 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating
8 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product
9 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product
10 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and
11 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product
12 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers;
13 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
14 therefor, automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the
15 supplier database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order
16 and available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier;
17 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
18 therefor, automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each
19 product purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from
20 the corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order;
21 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
22 therefor, automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to
23 each delivered product;
24 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
25 therefor, automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each
26 delivered product in the supplier database; and
27 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
28 therefor, automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered
29 product.
30 33. A method for multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution,
31 comprising the steps of:

1 under control of a programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
2 therefor, automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing
3 information, and product inventory information from multiple participating product
4 suppliers and entering the information into a supplier database, the supplier database
5 being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including product identifying
6 information, product inventory information, and product pricing information for the
7 multiple independent participating product suppliers, wherein:
8 the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of
9 participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and
10 participating product retailers, and
11 the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product
12 category;
13 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
14 therefor, automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order
15 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the
16 multiple participating product suppliers;
17 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
18 therefor, automatically entering the received order information into an order database,
19 the order database being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including
20 order information pertaining to
21 pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple
22 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product
23 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating
24 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product
25 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product
26 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and
27 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product
28 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers;
29 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
30 therefor, automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the

1 supplier database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order
2 and available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier;
3 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
4 therefor, automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each
5 product purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from
6 the corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order;
7 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
8 therefor, automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to
9 each delivered product;
10 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
11 therefor, automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each
12 delivered product in the supplier database; and
13 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
14 therefor, automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered
15 product,
16 further comprising at least one of the steps of:
17 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being
18 programmed therefor, enabling a first participating product supplier to conceal its
19 identity from a selected subset of the multiple participating product suppliers for
20 which ordered products, listed in orders placed with the eligible subset of the
21 multiple participating product suppliers, are available for delivery from the first
22 participating product supplier to a product purchaser;
23 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being
24 programmed therefor, enabling the first participating product supplier to conceal its
25 identity from a selected subset of the multiple participating product suppliers from
26 which ordered products, listed in orders placed with the first participating supplier,
27 may be delivered to a product purchaser;
28 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being
29 programmed therefor, enabling the first participating product supplier to conceal
30 from a product purchaser the identity of another participating product supplier from

1 which an ordered product, listed in an order placed with the first participating
 2 provider by the product purchaser, is delivered to the product purchaser; and
 3 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being
 4 programmed therefor, enabling the first participating product supplier to conceal
 5 the identity of a product purchaser from another participating product supplier from
 6 which an ordered product, listed in an order placed with the first participating
 7 provider by the product purchaser, is delivered to the product purchaser.

8 34. A method for multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution,
 9 comprising the steps of:

10 under control of a programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
 11 therefor, automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing
 12 information, and product inventory information from multiple participating product
 13 suppliers and entering the information into a supplier database, the supplier database
 14 being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including product identifying
 15 information, product inventory information, and product pricing information for the
 16 multiple independent participating product suppliers, wherein:

17 the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of
 18 participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and
 19 participating product retailers, and

20 the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product
 21 category;

22 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
 23 therefor, automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order
 24 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the
 25 multiple participating product suppliers;

26 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
 27 therefor, automatically entering the received order information into an order database,
 28 the order database being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including
 29 order information pertaining to
 30 pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple
 31 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product

1 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating
 2 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product
 3 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product
 4 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and
 5 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product
 6 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers;
 7 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
 8 therefor, automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the
 9 supplier database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order
 10 and available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier;
 11 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
 12 therefor, automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each
 13 product purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from
 14 the corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order;
 15 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
 16 therefor, automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to
 17 each delivered product;
 18 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
 19 therefor, automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each
 20 delivered product in the supplier database;
 21 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
 22 therefor, automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered
 23 product;
 24 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
 25 therefor, automatically aggregating order information pertaining to multiple orders
 26 placed by multiple product purchasers; and
 27 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
 28 therefor, automatically issuing instructions for delivery of ordered products, listed in the
 29 aggregated order, from a selected participating product supplier, the selected
 30 participating product supplier being selected based on a supplier figure-of-merit.
 31 35. The method of Claim 34, further comprising at least one of the steps of:

1 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
2 therefor, automatically selecting the selected participating product supplier based on
3 information in the supplier database; and

4 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
5 therefor, automatically receiving bids from at least one participating product supplier
6 and automatically selecting from among bidding participating product suppliers the
7 selected participating product supplier.

8 36. The method of Claim 35, further comprising the step of:

9 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
10 therefor, automatically selecting a newly-selected participating product supplier to
11 replace the selected participating product supplier based on at least one of updated
12 information in the supplier database and updated bids received from the bidding
13 participating product suppliers.

14 37. The method of Claim 34, further comprising the step of:

15 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
16 therefor, automatically aggregating order information pertaining to multiple orders
17 placed in a physical location of a participating product supplier and placed remotely
18 with the participating product supplier.

19 38. The method of Claim 34, further comprising the step of:

20 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
21 therefor, automatically aggregating order information pertaining to orders placed with
22 multiple participating product suppliers.

23 39. The method of Claim 38, further comprising the step of:

24 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
25 therefor, automatically aggregating order information pertaining to orders placed with
26 multiple participating product retailers.

27 40. The method of Claim 38, further comprising the step of:

28 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
29 therefor, enabling a first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of the
30 multiple participating product suppliers for aggregating order information.

1 41. A method for multiply-integrated system for product inventory, sales, and distribution,
2 comprising the steps of:
3 under control of a programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
4 therefor, automatically receiving product identifying information, product pricing
5 information, and product inventory information from multiple participating product
6 suppliers and entering the information into a supplier database, the supplier database
7 being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including product identifying
8 information, product inventory information, and product pricing information for the
9 multiple independent participating product suppliers, wherein:
10 the multiple independent participating product suppliers may include any of
11 participating product manufacturers, participating product distributors, and
12 participating product retailers, and
13 the multiple independent product suppliers offer products of a common product
14 category;
15 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
16 therefor, automatically receiving, from multiple participating product suppliers, order
17 information pertaining to orders placed by multiple product purchasers with the
18 multiple participating product suppliers;
19 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
20 therefor, automatically entering the received order information into an order database,
21 the order database being operatively linked to the programmed processor and including
22 order information pertaining to
23 pending orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple
24 independent product purchasers, wherein the multiple independent product
25 purchasers may include any of participating product manufacturers, participating
26 product distributors, participating product retailers, non-participating product
27 manufacturers, non-participating product distributors, non-participating product
28 retailers, and retail product purchasers, and
29 fulfilled orders placed with multiple participating product suppliers by multiple product
30 purchasers and fulfilled by the multiple participating product suppliers;

1 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
2 therefor, automatically searching, for each order placed by each product purchaser, the
3 supplier database to attempt to locate each ordered product listed in the placed order
4 and available for delivery from a corresponding participating product supplier;
5 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
6 therefor, automatically issuing instructions for delivery, for each order placed by each
7 product purchaser, of each ordered and located product to the product purchaser from
8 the corresponding participating product supplier, thereby fulfilling the order;
9 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
10 therefor, automatically updating order information in the order database pertaining to
11 each delivered product;
12 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
13 therefor, automatically updating the product inventory information pertaining to each
14 delivered product in the supplier database; and
15 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
16 therefor, automatically creating a financial accounting record for each delivered
17 product,
18 further comprising at least one of the steps of:
19 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being
20 programmed therefor, automatically adjusting product pricing information in the
21 supplier database in response to at least one of order information in the order
22 database and product inventory information in the supplier database; and
23 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being
24 programmed therefor, automatically adjusting local product inventory for the
25 multiple participating product suppliers by
26 automatically monitoring local product inventory information in the supplier
27 database,
28 in response to local product inventory information in the supplier database,
29 automatically issuing instructions for transfer of products out of local product
30 inventory of a first participating product supplier into local product inventory
31 of a second participating product supplier, and

1 in response to the transfer of local product inventory, automatically updating the
2 local product inventory information in the supplier database.

3 42. The method of Claim 41, wherein the transferred local product inventory includes at least
4 one of used product, rare product, collectible product, private-label product, and out-of-
5 production product.

6 43. The method of Claim 42, further comprising at least one of the step of:
7 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
8 therefor, consigning to the second participating product supplier at least one of
9 transferred used product, rare product, collectible product, private-label product, and
10 out-of-production product.

11 44. The method of Claim 41, further comprising at least one of the steps of:

12 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
13 therefor, enabling the first participating product supplier to select an eligible subset of
14 the multiple participating product suppliers to which product inventory may be
15 transferred; and

16 under control of the programmed processor, the programmed processor being programmed
17 therefor, enabling the second participating product supplier to select an eligible subset
18 of the multiple participating product suppliers from which product inventory may be
19 transferred.
20